

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

CFO-ORC FILE # 2001-29

ACCEPTED

NEW STATE RECORD \_\_\_\_\_ UNUSUAL RECORD X

rec'd 4/29/01

**Species:** Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephala rubinus*)

**Date:** 17 April 2001

**Number seen:** 2

**Sex:** male & female

**Plumage:**

Basic

**Locality:** small woodlot, 0.3 mi. W of 23 Rd on N side of Q Rd

**Elevation:** ~4400'

**Nearest town:** Campo

**County:** Baca

**Time observed:** ~12:45

**Duration of observation:** ~1.5 mins

**Description:** While conducting the vegetation sampling of a RMBO grassland transect, Brandon and I decided to investigate a small woodlot that looked promising for migrants. We had gone all the way through to the north end when Brandon found a male Vermilion Flycatcher. As we were watching the bird, we both found a female that was associating with the male, always being <15' from it.

The male was unmistakable, with a mostly-red head and red underparts. The bird had a dark brown eyeline that was very thin in front of the eye and gradually widened through and behind the eye and connected broadly to the nape of the same color. The upperparts, tail, and wings were also the same dark brown and the tertials and many covert feathers were fringed narrowly with pale. The eyes, bill, and legs were dark/black. The female was quite different in coloration, being a slightly paler and grayer brown (than the male) above and whitish below. There was a poorly-defined pale eyeline that started over the bill and extended through the eye; I did not note whether the two eyelines connected over the bill. The eyeline and the throat and malar region outlined a dark auricular patch that was the darkest part of the plumage. The whitish underparts were irregularly streaked with grayish-brown and the flanks were orange-pink. I did not note the vent region coloration. The wings were the same color as the upperparts, but had similar fringing to that of the male's wings. I did not note the tail color, particularly, but noted pale outer webs to the two R6 feathers that contrasted to darker inner webs.

Similar species eliminated by description: There really are no ID contenders for the male and the female is also quite distinctive. However, the underparts pattern easily rules out any other possibilities.

**Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):** none noted

**What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species?** I have seen >75 Vermilions and 10s to 1000s of all regularly-occurring North American red birds.

**Light conditions:** bright, with sun behind and above me

**Optical equipment used:** Swarovski 8.5x42

**Distance, and how estimated:** estimated at ~8m at closest approach

**Other observers who saw the bird with you:** Brandon Percival

**Other observers who saw the bird independently:** Marshall Iliff and Barry Zimmer and the tour participants of a Victor Emanuel Nature Tours tour saw the birds on 24 April

**If photographed, type of equipment and film:** not photographed

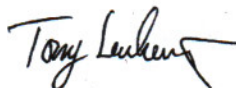
**List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:**

**a) at time of observation:** none

**b) after observation:** none

**Reporting observer:** Tony Leukering

**Signature:**



**Address:** Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, 14500 Lark Bunting Lane, Brighton, CO 80601

**Date report was written:** 17 (evening) & 29 April 2001 from memory



rec'd 5/28

2001-29

**Vermilion Flycatcher pair near Springfield, Baca County, Colorado, 23 Apr 2001**

On 23 April 2001 I was co-leading a Victor Emanuel Nature Tours tour in Colorado with Barry Zimmer. After a morning watching Lesser Prairie-Chickens on the lek east of Campo, we worked our way west towards Cottonwood and Carrizo Canyons. Tony Leukering had given me directions to a ranchyard 0.3 mi west of the intersection of 23 RD and Q RD, about 15 mi SSW of Springfield, where he and Brandon Percival had found a Vermilion Flycatcher pair 17 Apr. We arrived around 10:00 a.m. and the group quickly found the birds. We had ample opportunity to watch the birds over the next 25 minutes, and I had numerous views through a Swarovski ST-80 scope and my Zeiss 10x40 binocular. I took no notes at the time but submit this description, written 3 May 2001, for completeness.

The male was clearly a small flycatcher, and frequently perched on prominent exposed perches 5-15 ft off the ground. It made occasional flycatching sallies after which it returned to the same or a nearby perch. It was fairly small and chesty, with a short tail and its head was slightly crested. In overall color the male was a rich crimson, apparently equal in tone on the crest, neck, breast, and belly. The back and wings were fairly dark blackish, without obvious pale edging on the wings. The tail was black, fairly short, and square tipped or with a slight notch. There was an obvious black line from the lores through the eye, that became broader behind the eye and extended down the nape to the back. The eye was black. The bill was black and fairly short and thin.

The female was equal in size to the male in direct comparison, though appeared somewhat less crested. Her head, nape, back, wings, and tail were a fairly dark brown, with the head and tail being darker than the slightly paler brown back and even paler brown wings. The greater and median coverts were barrowly pale tipped (as were the tertials) creating thin whitish wingbars on the darker wings. The throat was white. The breast and underparts were mostly off-white. Fine brownish streaks traversed the center of the breast and extended down the flanks. The background color of the flanks was a light salmon color. The eye and bill were black. The head was mostly brownish but the area around the eyes and auriculars was distinctly darker, forming a mask somewhat reminiscent of a Myrtle Warbler. The narrow pale supercilium extended over the eye from the lores. I never heard either bird vocalize.

Identification of this species presents no difficulties. The male was aged as an adult based on the black wings and bright, rich red of the body feathering. I consider it very likely that these birds, which were obviously paired, might stay to breed in this lush ranchyard and recommend that Colorado birders monitor their activity through the summer season if they remain in the area.

Feel free to contact me if there are any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

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